

An Overview: California Child Welfare Services Workload Study and Associated Budgeting Methodology

What is the purpose of the study?

California Senate Bill (SB) 2030 mandated the Department of Social Services to conduct an evaluation of the current child welfare services workload and associated budgeting methodology. The purpose of this study is both to gauge the current workload and to ensure that associated budgeting mechanisms are adequate to today's child welfare environment and reflect innovative best practices in child welfare service delivery.

California's funding system for child welfare services was established over 15 years ago and many policy, demographic, and societal changes have since dramatically affected workload and the ability to deliver high quality services. The study is expected to recommend new budget methodologies to adequately fund the system for current caseload levels, supportive services, and preventative services to respond to today's child and family needs.

How will the project be carried out?

The Department has contracted with the American Humane Association, a nonprofit organization with offices in Englewood, Colorado, and Sherman Oaks, to carry out the study. In partnership with Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc., of Sacramento and several expert consultants, the project will be completed through the following steps:

1. A ***policy review*** will be conducted to ensure that laws, regulations, and policies impacting workload and budgeting are responded to in the study and budgeting process.
2. A ***workload measurement study*** will be implemented to analyze current workload demands, including time expended in innovative programs and services.
3. A ***proposed budget methodology*** will be developed in conformity with policy, in consultation with stakeholders and state staff, and by incorporating data from the workload measurement study including alternative workload/caseload standards.

How can I be sure that my county and our workers will be fairly represented in the study?

The project has been designed to ensure maximum participation of county departmental personnel and other stakeholders through several means:

- ◆ ***Advisory Group*** – SB 2030 mandated the establishment of an Advisory Group for the project. The group includes representatives from the California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), California Partnership for Children, California Independent Public Employees Legislative Counsel (CIPELC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), California Department of Social Services state staff, and County department directors from the following counties: Siskiyou, Placer, Los Angeles, Orange, Stanislaus, Sacramento, San Mateo, and Santa Clara. Project staff will regularly report to the Advisory Group and will seek Advisory Group comments at critical stages of the project such as establishing survey instrumentation, finalizing a focus group plan, and establishing budgeting standards.

- ◆ ***One hundred percent sample*** – The workload measurement study will include a 100% sample of county child welfare staff from throughout the state. Cooperation and support in implementing this 100% workload measurement process is important, so that all job categories and professional staff functions can be included in our study. The time measurement study is now projected to occur on a rolling basis (with two weeks of data collected for each county) from August 23 through October 15, 1999.
- ◆ ***Focus groups*** – Focus groups will be held throughout the state in regional configurations with all counties invited to participate in a group. We will use focus groups to learn through direct conversation about staff's workload concerns and innovative programs and practices that should be included in the workload measurement study as time collection categories. (A separate detailed focus group plan is available from the state Department of Social Services.)
- ◆ ***Structured interviews with key personnel*** – Structured interviews are planned with key personnel from throughout the state to supplement data collected in the workload measurement study.

What consideration will the study give to innovative practices and programs?

Such programs will be identified in the policy review and in focus groups and will be included as work measurement objectives so that time spent in these activities is sampled across the state in the workload measurement study. In addition, for some of the key innovations that are taking place in specific locations, specialized work study designs will be used to estimate the amount of time devoted to these practices.

How will the study data be incorporated into the budgeting process?

The workload measurement study will result in new workload and caseload standards reflecting current workloads more accurately and accounting for time spent in innovative practice and preventative services. These current workload data will be the basis for proposals to revise the budgeting process grounded in current workload realities.

What is the projected time frame for the study and for development and operationalization of the revised budgeting process?

The policy review, workload measurement study, and a proposed budgeting methodology will be completed by January 1, 2000.

For further information about the study please contact:

Financial Planning Branch
 California Department of Social Services
 744 P Street
 Sacramento, California 95814
 (916) 657-3439